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SECURITY COUNCIL
Fiftieth year

Letter dated 31 May 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of an address dated 26 May 1995 by the President of the Republic of Kazakstan, N. A. Nazarbaev, to all citizens of the Republic concerning the destruction of the last nuclear explosive device located at the former Semipalatinsk test site (see annex). I would be grateful if you would have this letter and the annex to it circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 70 of the preliminary list and as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Akmaral Kh. ARYSTANBEKOVA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Kazakstan
to the United Nations

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Annex

Address by the President of Kazakstan to all citizens of the Republic dated 26 May 1995

A line is finally being drawn under a long period of Kazak history connected with the testing and deployment of nuclear weapons in our country: The last nuclear explosive device at the former Semipalatinsk test site is to be destroyed.

For many years the long-suffering Kazak people bore the brunt of the international nuclear frenzy. Over a period of almost 45 years a total of 459 nuclear explosions were conducted on the Semipalatinsk steppe, 113 of them in the atmosphere. The health of half a million Kazaks who were exposed to atomic radiation was sacrificed to the insane nuclear arms race. We cannot begin to estimate the colossal material and moral damage inflicted on our people.

Of course, neither the population of the Republic nor the President could countenance this state of affairs. The permanent suffering inflicted on the victims and the sharp sword hanging over our heads have impelled me to heed the voice of reason and the voice of my heart: In August 1991 I promulgated a decree closing down the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site.

However, our country has continued to harbour the awful legacy of the cold war - the last nuclear explosive device emplaced there by the military departments of the former USSR prior to the closure of the test site.

At the time only a small group of Kazak and Russian specialists knew about this dangerous situation, but nevertheless in my capacity of head of State I never stopped thinking about the need to eliminate the danger. Since a nuclear detonation, albeit a very last one, was totally out of the question, I ordered work to be carried out on formulating various options for destroying the device which would be safe both for people and the environment. Specialists subsequently decided that the best option would be to eliminate the device using a conventional explosive. This method would not entail a nuclear explosion as such, and the chance of any radioactivity or ionizing radiation escaping has been totally excluded. The nuclear explosive device will be destroyed at the end of May or during the first 10 days of June.

All work connected with removing the device from storage has been conducted under my constant supervision. And during the last few days information about the completion of this unique operation has regularly passed across my desk. Kazakstan is therefore ensuring that the activities of the military personnel and specialists are closely monitored.

In a few days' time the final chapter in our State's nuclear history will be closed thanks to the efforts of Russian and Kazak specialist personnel. We have been persistently and systematically advancing towards this goal since achieving genuine independence. Let us recall the Alma Ata Declaration adopted in December 1991, when the nuclear-weapon States made an immediate commitment to

establish mechanisms for joint control of those weapons. We then signed the five-party Lisbon Protocol, thus committing ourselves to implement the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. In 1993 another historic event occurred - Kazakstan acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, whereupon it basically became a non-nuclear State. The security guarantees we received from the nuclear Powers demonstrate the international community's support for our principled position on disarmament issues.

Kazakstan intends to adhere closely to its international obligations. At the end of April this year the last lethal warheads were removed from the territory of the Republic. Henceforth Kazaks need not fear the nuclear genie which has always threatened to break free.

Following the elimination of its nuclear weapons, our country will undoubtedly grow stronger. By demonstrating our adherence to a policy of peace and cooperation, we have not only ushered a spirit of tranquillity and stability into our home but have also thrown open our doors to an equitable and fruitful dialogue with all other countries; we have resolutely embarked on the path of reforming our society and building a flourishing democratic State.

I firmly believe that I enjoy the support of all Kazaks, for whom the greatest treasure is a clear sky undimmed by the fires of war. For there is no greater happiness than to be sure of what tomorrow will bring, to work in peace, to raise one's children, and to tend one's hearth and home.

I hope that our country will be able to derive full benefit from the historic opportunity which has been offered us, and that it will embark on the road to civilized development. I wish you all peace, prosperity, happiness, well-being and tranquillity.

(Signed) Nursultan NAZARBAEV